

Home Life on Early Ranches of Southwest Texas

CHAPTER XX

Pendleton Rector - Guadalupe County

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PENDLETON RECTOR came to Texas in 1830 with his father's family, Morgan Rector. That venerable gentleman, a native of Vermont, lured by the stories of the new country, had moved first to Kentucky, and then to Alabama. But according to reports the grass was greener in Texas. So he moved his family to Brazoria county in 1830.

Pendleton, one of Morgan Rector's sons, was 22 years of age at that time. Texas was struggling for freedom from the tyranny of Mexico. He immediately enlisted in the army and participated in the battle of Velasco, June 1832, as a member of Captain Austin's company. He also participated in the siege of Bexar, 1835, as a member of Captain York's company. In Service Record number 172, it is stated that he enlisted in the Army, March 1, and served until September 1, 1836, when he was discharged at Velasco.

The Lone Star Republic of Texas was greatly handicapped because of lack of sufficient funds, but was rich in vast domains of land. So the soldiers were paid a small amount of money, but mostly in tracts of land.

On October 26, 1848, Mr. Rector was issued a bounty certificate number 675 for 320 acres of land for his services from March 1, to May 29, 1836. He was a member of William H. Patton's company at San Jacinto, and on October, 1836, he was issued a donation certificate number 129 for 640 acres of land for having participated in that battle. On a muster roll at the General Land Office, he is shown as having enlisted in Captain Byrd Lockhart's company, July 4, 1836. On January 25, 1838, he received a certificate for one-third of a league of land from the Brazoria County Board.

Pendleton Rector was now about forty years of age. He had spent most of the past 18 years of his life fighting for the freedom of Texas, or for the protection of its settlers from the Indians. Texas had been annexed to the United States.

He was tired of fighting and wanted to settle down and enjoy the quiet and peace of home.

But his father, lured again by the "great opportunities of the West," had moved to Lavernia. So he went "home" to Lavernia.

Soon after his arrival there, he met Mary Jane Bridges of Prairie Lea, a village just across the San Marcos River in the edge of Caldwell county.

Land was both plentiful and cheap. He did not like the location of any of the grants that had been awarded him. He had bought 100 acres of land for \$2.00 an acre on the banks of the San Marcos River because the Indians did not raid that section so much. He would also be near his parents and those of his wife. Since cattle raising was to be his main industry he needed an abundant water supply throughout the year, and that would be available from the river.

Pendleton Rector's long years of service as a fighter had been motivated by his desire to protect his country and the women and children from the Indians. He was a tower of strength physically, but possessed a gentle, protective nature.

His wife, Mary Jane, was a fragile, dainty, beautiful girl who appealed to his protective instinct.

Pendleton Rector happily built a house of hand-hewn logs for her before their marriage. It contained one room, a side room, and a porch. He split the shingles and hewed the logs for the floor. He also made the furniture—bedstead, chairs, table, and bench. The workmanship was crude, to be sure, but it was the best that he could do. He was more than compensated for all his hard work when he brought Mary Jane, his bride, "home," and she beamed her approval. And as long as she lived, her welfare and happiness were his first consideration. Although she endured the hardships of the pioneer woman at that time, he relieved her of every hardship possible.

During the early years she did the cooking on an outdoor fireplace. The cooking vessels consisted of an iron pot and "skillet with a lid" so the coals could be both under and above the food.

Food was plentiful. Potatoes were not grown at first, but there was seedling fruit. Some vegetables were raised in the garden. Honey could be secured any time by robbing a "honey tree." This also provided great sport. Sometimes the bees had to be killed before the honey could be taken. A calf could be butchered any time that beef was needed. There were deer, wild turkey, and wild hogs. The hogs were so hard to catch that Mr. Rector trained the dogs to bring them in. Because the hogs were of quick action and had sharp teeth, sometimes the dogs were badly lacerated.

The Rectors branded the calves about twice a year. Other times they ran wild. There were no fences at first. They grazed the native grass and drank the water from the river. Buyers made regular rounds for the buying of cattle. Practically no cost for feeding! Practically no cost for marketing!

While the cattle industry was Mr. Rector's main business, he raised corn and cotton, mostly for home use. The corn was ground into meal and made into hominy. They picked cotton and piled it in log pens. Later Mr. Rector took it to the gin where it was transferred to big

baskets and carried up a stairway and placed in stalls where it could be ginned when his "turn" came. It was a slow process, but it was such an improvement over picking the lint off the seed by hand that Mr. Rector was delighted with the opportunity for receiving ginning service. The gin was one of the earmarks of progress.

Gradually the corn and cotton fields were enclosed in brush fences to protect the crops from the ravages of the cattle. Later rail fences were built, and finally fences were built of lumber brought from Austin in ox-drawn wagons.

"It was such a relief to lie down to sleep, knowing that the cattle could not break through the fence during the night and devour my crops," Mr. Rector said in later years.

The cotton was used mostly at home for the spinning of thread and weaving of cloth.

While Mr. Rector was busy seeing after the cattle and tending the crops, Mrs. Rector was busy inside the home. She did the spinning and knitted the hose for her family. She wove the thread into cloth and dyed it with native dye and made all of the clothes by hand.

There was a doctor in Prairie Lea just across the river, but going after him was a slow trip. Then too, he might be out on a case for several days.

With all of the work to be done at home, Mrs. Rector always took time to help nurse the sick in the community. She was an excellent cook and seemed to know just what the patient could eat. Her low, soft voice and fragile appearance brought serenity and hope to the sick room.

Washing was done frequently in the river if the weather permitted. By doing so, water did not have to be carried up the banks to the house. The clothes were dipped into the river then spread out on a "battling bench," a log split in two and the surface smoothed in order not to tear the clothes. The clothes were then saturated with home-made lye soap and were "beat" with a battling paddle.



PENDLETON RECTOR



Built by Stephen C. Rector in 1887 on the site of the old Pendleton Rector homestead.

they were rinsed in the river. It required one day to do the family washing, and still another day to do the ironing. The heavy "sad irons" were on the fire out-of-doors. Since ironing was usually done on the dingle indoors, this necessitated many carrying the iron back and forth on lost much of the heat while carried into the house. Bending the hot coals to change irons was an uncomfortable task. Despite the hard work Mrs. Rector took a great pride in getting the clothes of her family cleaned and ironed nicely.

They had only one slave, a negro woman, which Mr. Rector bought during the Civil War. He expressed his confidence in the South's ability to win the war when he paid \$1,100 for her. She worked in the field and also helped with the work in the house.

They were setting out sweet potato slips the day Mr. Rector received the news that the negroes were freed. He waited until they finished, then he told her that she was a free negro, but that if she wanted to continue working for him, he would pay her. She did so, and her husband continued to work for his

former master who lived in a nearby community.

Mr. Rector was too old to enter the regular army when the Civil War started. He was against secession, but when war was declared, his sympathies were with the South. He became captain of the Cibola Home Guards 90th Brigade, Confederate Army, stationed at Lavernia. He put forth every effort to keep his smoke house filled with cured meats, meal, and whatever other food was available for the soldiers. They knew he expected them to come and get what they wanted and needed. Once again he was

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C. C. Buxton
Owner

fighting for the rights of his country and helping to protect the women and children whose husbands and fathers were away from their homes in the regular army.

But when the war was over, he welcomed the opportunity to settle down again to the peace and quiet of his home. He and Mrs. Rector loved to sit around the fire at night while the children studied their lessons. While she knitted, he simply rested.

The children, Stephen C. and Margaret, attended a private school in the community at first. Later they went to school in Prairie Lea. The entire family attended Sunday School and Church there.

They did not consider that they had a hard time. The children played with the dogs and hunted "possums and coons." They took part in community activities, usually traveling on horseback. The entire family attended meetings of the Temperance Union. Other community meetings of an educational nature were the debating societies. The older folks took part in the debates while the children "said speeches." And everybody enjoyed the Sunday night singings.

The social life was frequently tied in with the "helping a neighbor." When anyone decided to build a house, the men would meet in the river bottom, help hew the logs, and put them on ox-carts and haul them to the building site. The entire

community would then come together; and while the men were building the house, the women cooked and served the dinner. It was not unusual to build an entire house in one day.

Another great social occasion was "a quilting." The hostess and some of the neighbors prepared dinner while the others quilted. These dinners were really feasts of baked chicken, chicken and dumplings, cakes and pies prepared by the hostess before the guests arrived. But many big pots of coffee, pots of boiled vegetables, and bread cooked in skillets were prepared after their arrival.

On occasions like these, the men exchanged ideas on farming, discussed politics and religion and exchanged the news of the neighborhood. The women exchanged recipes, home-aid remedies, discussed religion, and the news of the community.

The Pendleton Rectors never moved from their first home, although it was small.

Weddings were great occasions, so when Margaret Rector decided to marry O. H. Gregg, the son of Bishop Gregg, of the Episcopal Church, the wedding ceremony was read in the home of a nearby friend in order to accommodate the great number of guests. After the ceremony, a wedding supper was served. The next day the guests enjoyed the "In-fare dinner" at the groom's home.

When their son, Stephen C., married Martha Smith, he brought her home

where he could continue to manage the farm. But two rooms connected by a walk, were added to the old home.

Mrs. Rector died October 5, 1875, at the age of 49 years. Pendleton Rector continued to live in the old house until his death 12 years later in 1887. But he was happy for his son to build the large two-story house in the yard which is still standing.

He was a continuous source of pleasure to his grandchildren. They would listen for hours while he told stories of the wars he fought in and the fights against the Indians.

Although both he and his wife were of "northern parentage," he hated the "Yankees" as long as he lived. He had a stroke of paralysis from which he suffered the last six weeks before his death. But he managed to tell his daughter-in-law to have her brother come and build his coffin from the walnut that he grew in his bottom land on the San Marcos River. This was because the factory-made coffins came from the North. "He did not want to use anything a Yankee had had anything to do with. He probably did not realize that the handles and padding came from the North," said Miss May Rector, a granddaughter who furnished the material for this story.

The original farm of 100 acres bought by Pendleton Rector in 1856, has been added to until it now includes 340 acres, and is still owned and lived on by the Rector grandchildren.

Development of the Houston Market

One of a Series of Articles on the Southwest's Livestock Markets

By JAMES W. SARTWELLE, President, Port City Stock Yards Company, Houston, Texas.

THINKERS and leaders of men, from the dim past to the present, have commented on the far-reaching effect and the attractive possibilities for profit, of the livestock industry. As one of the pursuits of agriculture it has always been held up as a symbol of highest achievement for the consideration of those who wrest their living from the land.

Two such comments always come to my mind whenever I indulge in my reminiscence of this industry with which I have been associated most of my life. One of them comes down from the time of Abraham when it was admonished: "Grain depletes the soil, but cattle leave fat in the land."

The other observer was no other than that hero and leader of early Texas, General Sam Houston. He was so struck with the vast possibilities of the new empire in which he had cast his fortune that he was impelled to write numerous letters to friends in the United States advising them of the exceptionally favorable con-

ditions here that awaited the pioneer of courage and vision. In all of his comments of this character that have come to light, the General emphasized the tremendous natural advantages for the development of a great livestock business.

Both of these statements with reference to the livestock industry in general and to its possibilities for development in the sections of Texas with which Houston was familiar, are just as true today as on the days they were uttered.

Unshakable confidence in the future of this territory as a great and ever-growing center of the industry, prompted the establishment in March, 1931, of the Port City Stock Yards. Subsequent developments have proved that the organizers were men of good judgment as well as of faith and sound foresight.

The growth from 1931 to 1937 was slow but always steadily upward but since June of the latter year the Port City Stock Yards has experienced the greatest percentage of gain of any market in the nation. This was a result of taking advantage of natural resources that couldn't help but respond to continuous, intelligent effort. It was not the result of boom promotion and I have no hesitancy in predicting that little of the surface has yet been scratched.

May, 1938, was an epochal month in the history of the enterprise. At this time the facilities of the yards were greatly enlarged and modernized. Space will per-

mit mention of only a few of the major improvements. One of the most important was the construction of concrete loading docks. And, of course, in addition to the railroad docks the yards are equipped with special chutes for unloading from trucks, separate divisions for all classes of cattle, a dipping vat, chutes for inspecting, vaccinating, branding, de-horning, special pens for hogs and sheep, and all of the other necessary facilities that should be included to give adequate and satisfactory service.

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Another important development of the Yards was the establishment in October, 1938, by the Government of a marketing

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